

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

August 27, 1986

PRESS RELEASE

ARS MEDICA: ART, MEDICINE, AND THE HUMAN CONDITION
September 2 - November 30, 1986

More than 100 prints, drawings, and photographs depicting five centuries of medical practices and attitudes toward health, illness, and the value of life are on view in the Prints and Drawings Galleries through November 30.

Ars Medica: Art, Medicine, and the Human Condition is funded by SmithKline Beckman Corporation and is presented by The Cleveland Museum of Art in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Cleveland Health Education Museum. The exhibition is drawn from a special collection of art related to medicine, acquired by the Philadelphia Museum of Art primarily through grants from SmithKline Beckman.

The works relate to four major themes: Anatomy, the discipline that developed during the Renaissance through the twin researches of artists and physicians; Healers, from Christ and the saints to the barber-surgeons, quacks, and country doctors who attended most of the population; Disease, Disability, and Madness; and the Cycle of Life, from birth and aging to the mystery of death.

Among the early works in the show are seven woodcut illustrations from Andreas Vesalius's De Humani Corporis Fabrica (Basel, 1543), one of the most famous and influential books on anatomy, known for the remarkably animated quality of the plates. In a less graphic treatment of anatomy, Robert Rauschenberg uses an X-ray image of his body in a color lithograph/silkscreen titled Booster (1967), which makes references to man's relationship to modern science and technology.

Popular attitudes toward doctors are revealed in a number of works: Thomas Rowlandson's satirical etching, The Amputation (1785); Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo's ink and wash drawing, Itinerant Dentist Treating a Patient, With Several Observers (c. 1790), a vignette of everyday life in Venice; and George Bellows's sympathetic lithograph, Base Hospital (1918).

Other notable works include prints by Albrecht Dürer, Francisco Goya, Honoré Daumier, James Ensor, Edvard Munch, and Max Beckmann; and drawings by Pompeo Batoni and Benjamin West.

Seven photographs by W. Eugene Smith, who became known for his 1948 photo essay, "Country Doctor," published in Life magazine, are included along with photographs by Edweard Muybridge, Thomas Eakins, and Diane Arbus.

This is the fourth exhibition of its kind organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art since 1948, when SmithKline Beckman, a Philadelphia manufacturer of prescription medicines and health-related products, began funding the purchase of art for the Ars Medica collection. About half of the works in the Cleveland showing were added to the collection during the past four years, broadening its scope to include photographs and works by contemporary artists.

Ars Medica and its fully-illustrated, 230-page catalogue are made possible by SmithKline Beckman and supported by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Pew Memorial Trust. The catalogue is available in the Museum Bookstore (\$17.95).

Complementing the exhibition is a series of lectures by associate curator of education Helen Borowitz, beginning at 2:15 pm on Wednesday, November 5, and continuing for three consecutive weeks. She will give gallery talks at 1:30 pm October 15 and 19.

For additional information or black-and-white photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106, (216) 421-7340.